

Arts & Entertainment

Williams' lasting 'Menagerie' at Kimball

By Scott Harrah
Senior Editor

When the late playwright Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" debuted on Broadway in the mid-1940s, it altered the course of theater with its thematic realism, said an Emmy award-winning director who was a friend of the author.

George Keathley, director of The Missouri Repertory Theatre's production of "Menagerie," said in a phone interview that the play is undeniably Williams' finest effort. His production will be performed tonight on the Kimball Hall stage at 8 p.m.

Set in a tenement section of St. Louis just before World War II, the semi-autobiographical story centers on the Wingfield family. Amanda, the overbearing mother, incessantly nags her two grown children, Tom and Laura, about doing something meaningful with their lives. The characters all retreat into worlds of illusion to escape their bleak realities. Amanda constantly reminisces about her days as a grand Southern belle; Tom delves into a world of poetry and movies as he reviles his factory job; and Laura, who is crippled, listens to records and collects glass animals.

Williams based the character of Laura on his sister Rose, who was mentally unstable and had a lobotomy, Keathley said.

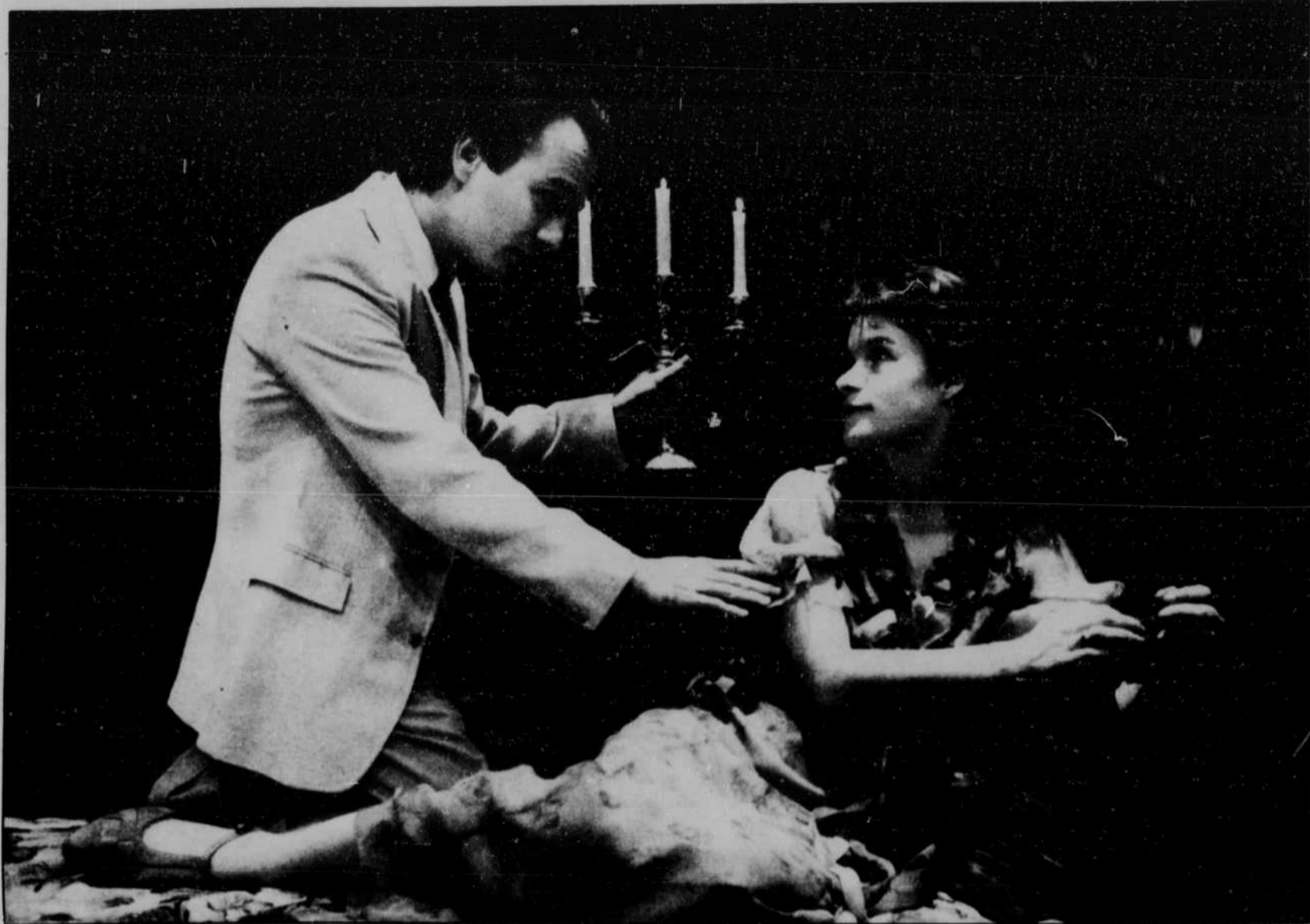
Unlike Williams' other plays, Keathley said, "Menagerie" wasn't predicated on melodrama. The play is natural and the emotion never seems strained, he said.

Keathley said that because Williams was a romantic writer, his plays have the misfortune of seeming too maudlin. The time element has something to do with this, he explained.

"Romantic writing eventually becomes melodramatic as it ages," he said.

He said the difference with "Menagerie" is the characters' tragic circumstances, which are timeless and still have much meaning today.

"One of the strongest tests of brilliance of the play ("Menagerie") is it works as good today as it did then (in



Mark and Elizabeth Robbins in "The Glass Menagerie."

Courtesy of Kimball Hall

the '40s)," he said.

He said that although critics lauded "Menagerie," Williams credited Laurette Taylor's portrayal of Amanda with the play's initial success.

But Williams' imagery was the true key to the play's brilliance, he said.

Poised on the balance of two ideals — one romantically genteel, the other mechanically stringent — the Wing-

fields find it difficult to live in the real world. Amanda tries desperately to get Tom ahead by giving him business advice, but he realizes he's not cut out for this society. When Laura fails at business college, Amanda arranges for a "gentleman caller" to visit her daughter in hopes of marrying her off to someone successful. But Laura is too caught up in her fantasy world of glass animals and is too emotionally

precarious to deal with marriage.

As the characters realize that their futures are uncertain, they are unable to face their lives with fortitude.

Keathley said his production captures the characters' psyches and Williams' message, but it's difficult to do so consistently.

"It ('Menagerie') has to be different every time," he said. "You have to do it as if it's never been done before."

Keathley said he has worked on 10 different productions of "Menagerie," including the recent Broadway revival.

Although he has been involved with the play so many times, he said he never gets tired of it.

"'The Glass Menagerie' is one of the most beautiful plays of the 20th century, regardless of the production," he said.

Dead by satellite and Guthrie to play FarmAid

By Mary Nell Westbrook
Staff Reporter

Arlo Guthrie has been signed at the last minute to perform at FarmAid III, and The Grateful Dead will perform at the concert via sat-

ellite. Bruce Hornsby and the Range have canceled their performance in Saturday's benefit concert.

No reason was given for the Hornsby cancellation. Sometime during the last hour of the show The

Grateful Dead will be broadcast live from Madison Square Garden in New York City. Two large TV screens will be mounted on either side of the \$35,000 stage, which is now completed, said Tim O'Connor, executive director of

FarmAid.

"The Grateful Dead have been in on FarmAid from the beginning," he said. "This is their way of trying to contribute."

The Nebraska football team squeezed onto the field with con-

struction workers for practice Wednesday because the practice field was too wet from Tuesday night's rain, O'Connor said.

More last-minute cancellations and additions are possible, officials said.

Rumored appearances overshadow committed acts

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Editor

Last month rumors that U2 or Bob Dylan might suddenly announce their appearance at FarmAid III obscured the smaller acts that joined up daily.

Lesser-knowns like the Bandaloo Doctors and Lyle Lovett sneaked in between Lou Reed and John Mellencamp, forcing local newspaper people to dish through press releases in consternation trying to get a line on these mysterious new names.

Culled from information sources as varied as metropolitan newspapers and library books, here is a brief rundown of the more obscure acts and their achievements to date.

The Bandaloo Doctors featuring Bonnie Bramlett:

Bonnie Bramlett was one-half of the late 1960s-early 1970s blues-funk duet Delaney and Bonnie, who worked with such blues-rock luminaries as Eric Clapton, J.J. Cale, Leon Russell and Dave

Mason. She and her husband, Delaney Bramlett, toured with Blind Faith and the Plastic Ono Band.

Bramlett also worked, in blackface and a wig, as one of Ike Turner's Ikettes during the late 60s.

Although Bramlett fell out of the list of musical household names during the '70s, she made headlines for a scuffle she and Stephen Stills had in a Columbus, Ohio, hotel bar with Elvis Costello. Costello called Ray Charles a "blind, ignorant nigger" and Bramlett knocked him cold.

The new band, the Bandaloo Doctors, promises to be a raw-edged bar-band blues/soul outfit.

The Cruzados:

The Cruzados are basically a reformed version of the East Los Angeles punk/new wave band The Plugz, who scored a series of local underground hits during the L.A. punk explosion of 1980-82. The band had a strong Hispanic flavor in their music that set them apart from other skinheaded, nihilist bands of that volatile scene like

Black Flag, Germs and the Circle Jerks.

After playing around the L.A. area for years, the Plugz finally made it into national cult status by appearing on the soundtrack of Alex Cox's independent film classic "Repo Man." The Plugz perform most of the incidental music on the soundtrack and turn in a breakneck Spanish version of Johnny Rivers' "Secret Agent Man" ("Hombre Secreto").

Soon after this soundtrack was released, the Cruzados emerged and recorded a gorgeous album of guitar pop that put them on Rolling Stone magazine's list of new young bands to watch in 1985 along with 10,000 Maniacs and Austin's Zeitgeist.

The Cruzados' newest LP, "After Dark," is Mellencamp-influenced rootsy rock, with a de-emphasis on the ethnic elements that made the debut LP so unique.

Lyle Lovett:

Lovett has been called the Tom Waits of the "New Country Music" (a category populated by the likes

of Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle and the Lonesome Pines) because of his literate, cerebral lyrics and his slightly off-center musical arrangements. Along with Yoakam, Lovett is considered the boy most likely to make country music sophisticated.

Gary Morris:

Gary Morris is a popular country singer who has had hits with "Headed for a Heartache" and "Don't Look Back" on the country charts.

Recently he landed a lead role in the Broadway adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel "Les Miserables." That show has been a steady sellout since it opened in March.

John Prine:

Although he is occasionally inconsistent on vinyl and his songs from the early 1970s seem dated today by hippie platitudes like "Your Flag Decal Won't Get You Into Heaven Anymore," Prine is one of the few singer/songwriters alive who actually deserved the often disreputable title of "the new

Dylan."

His career has often paralleled that of Dylan, going through a straight folk period, a rock 'n' roll period and a country period before simply blending these elements in his current sound.

Prine's gravelly tunelessness as a vocalist has also been compared to Dylan.

Prine's best compositions are story songs that show a range of narrative voices unmatched in American music. "Angel From Montgomery" relates the tale of an old woman lamenting her lost youth and lost dreams as well as any prose writer could. It's easy to forget in the course of the song that Prine is a man in his mid-30s. The song eventually became a minor hit for Bonnie Raitt.

Prine's "Muhlenberg County" has been performed by both Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson.

The Unforgiven:
This Jason and the Scorchers-influenced band boasts a bevy of guitar players and a dress code straight from a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western.